



— The Connection —

November 22, 2023

Welcome to Employment Connections' (EC) Division newsletter - *The Connection!* This newsletter focuses on sharing information to connect, engage, support and excel.

Read regular updates on projects and programs, and this month's message from our senior leaders, Director Ismaila Maidadi and Assistant Director Alberto Isiordia. We also want and need to hear from you! Send your thoughts and suggestions to the [EC Virtual Suggestion Box](#); and for newsletter ideas and comments, you can share those by emailing the EC Communications [inbox](#), and we'll be in touch with you!

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Message from your EC leaders

Hi Employment Connections team,

The days and weeks are flying by, and the Thanksgiving holiday is here! This is the time we reflect on what we are thankful for and take stock of the past months and what we have accomplished.

As Employment Connections leaders, we are feeling an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the dedicated team we have and the amount of focus, hard work, and commitment we witness each day. You show up and do the challenging work of serving our customers and meeting them where they are. You help customers see the possibility of a better time and place and guide them to the resources and tools they need to create a positive change in their lives. We are thankful to have you on the EC team and we will continue to support your work and smooth the path to make your work fulfilling and rewarding.





Veteran's Day was celebrated in a big way with our very own ESD VERG. The ceremony featured speakers Commissioner Cami Feek and Deputy Director Solomon Gilbert of the Department of Veterans Affairs. Also, WorkSource Tacoma's very own Rhetta Baker sang "The Star-Spangled Banner." The event was moving and included a personalized video tribute to ESD veterans. You can watch the full event at [ESD's Veterans Day video - TVW](#).

In November, we celebrate Native American Heritage Month, which honors not only Native Americans but Alaska Natives, Native Hawaiians, and other affiliate Island communities. This year's theme is "Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity." An article later in the newsletter highlights ways to honor and recognize Northwest Native heritage.



This year, the Washington Workforce Association's 2023 Fall Conference had an extra influx of Employment Connections staff. We sat in on strategic sessions and networked with teammates and other workforce professionals from around the state. Back in July, EC offered to cover the cost of attendance for staff to participate. About 125 of you responded, and we approved all who applied. Several members of our leadership team attended as well, and EC was well represented.

The session rooms were full, and energy was high. We especially loved [Christian Paige's](#) introduction through poetry. You will find an excerpt later in the newsletter along with more on the conference including photos and comments.

The WWA Fall Conference is one of our favorite spaces for building relationships and taking a holistic look at the future of our work. The EC leadership team made great connections with our local Workforce Development Boards as well as other agencies and partners.

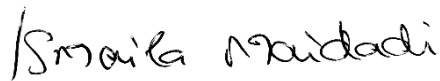


Standing left to right: Marie Kurose, CEO, Seattle-King County WDC; Kevin Perkey, past CEO Workforce SW Washington (WSW) (WWA facilitator); Lisa Romine, CEO SkillSource Regional Workforce Board; Amy Martinez, CEO South Central

Workforce Council; Norton Sweet, EC Central Sound regional director; Mark Mattke, CEO Spokane Workforce Council; John Dickson, EC Eastern regional director; Marissa Cahill, Interim Executive Director, Northwest Workforce Council; Jessica Barr, North Sound regional director; Alberto Isiordia, EC assistant director of operations; Tennille Johnson, EC SW Coastal regional director; Kneeling left to right: Ismaila Maidadi, EC director; Miriam Halliday, CEO WSW; Katie Condit, CEO Workforce Central; Anne Goranson, EC strategic initiatives manager; and Todd Wurl, EC Central regional director.

Our relationships are to be valued and treasured. We are grateful for the relationships we have on our team and in our personal lives and count you all as valued teammates. Thank you for everything you do to serve our customers and for bringing your best self to work each day. You make our agency a better place in all ways possible.

May your Thanksgiving be happy, meaningful, and full of all the things you hope for. We wish you the warmest of Thanksgivings.



Ismaila (Ish) Maidadi
Director, Employment Connections



Alberto Isiordia
Assistant Director of Operations, Employment
Connections

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Project updates



A little bit about WIT

Submitted by Michelle Griffith, WIT project owner

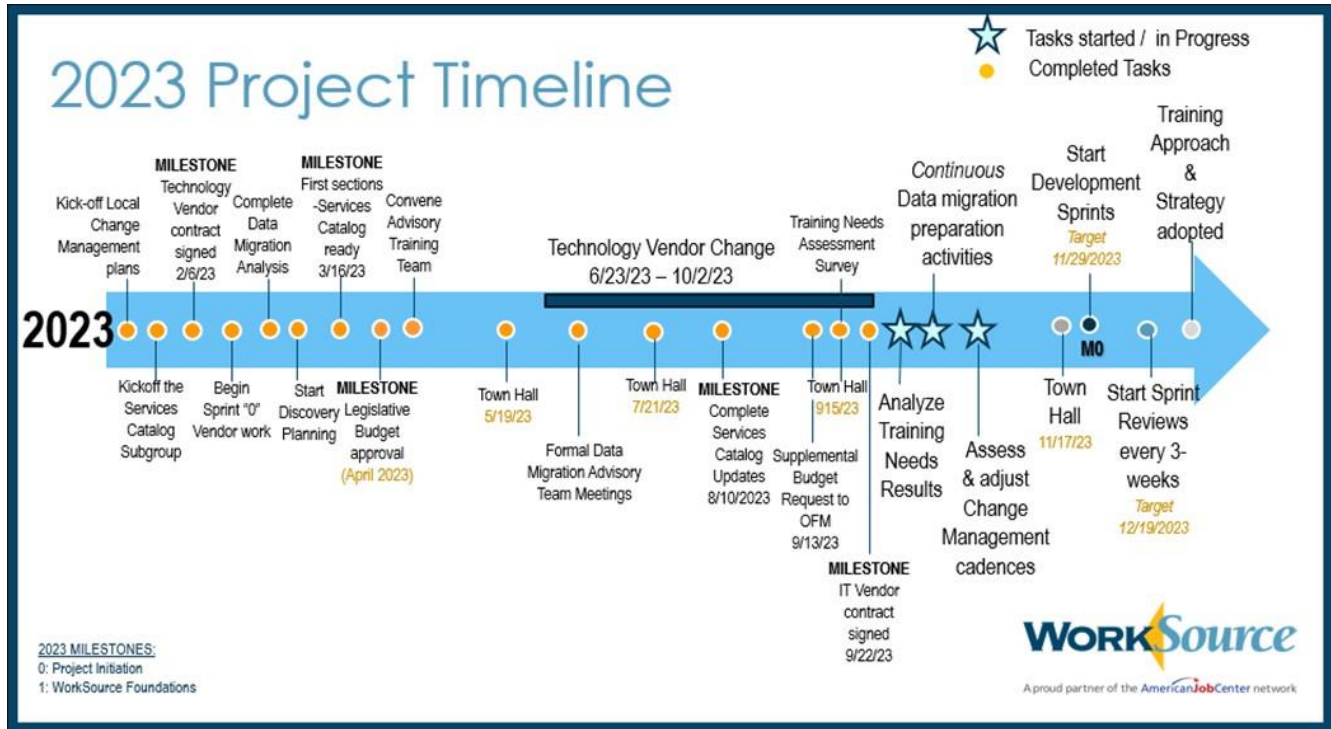
I'm one of those people who gets excited about fall with its crisp air and brilliant colors, but I'm even more thrilled that this season, the software development begins!

Sprint Reviews show WorkSource system staff the working software as it is developed. Sprints will occur every **three weeks**. During November's WIT town hall, we learned that the first Sprint Review is tentatively planned for mid- December.

We recognize not everyone's schedule will allow them to participate in a live session, and so, all the Sprint Reviews will be recorded, The recordings will be posted as videos on the Workforce Professionals Center [website](http://wpc.wa.gov) (wpc.wa.gov) [Sprint Review Engagement & Feedback](#) page.

To facilitate the best use of time, the project team will categorize the Sprint Review recordings into

smaller segments by topic. For example, a single Sprint Review may cover jobseeker self-service registration and staff-assisted deskside registration. Staff will be able to select and review the topic they are interested in from the recorded session, without having to watch a full Sprint Review.



To see more of what we’re working on this month, check out the “What’s going on with the project?” summary on the [WIT Replacement Project](#) page, along with the [monthly status report](#). Both can be found within the wpc.wa.gov website.

WIT reminders:

- Don’t forget to regularly check out the [WIT Replacement Project](#) page on the Workforce Professionals Center site. It’s continuously updated with excellent information about the project, including the most recent recordings from the WIT town halls, the upcoming sprint review sessions and project status updates.
- Have comments or suggestions for our WIT product team about the sprint review you watched? You can submit feedback and ideas directly to us using the [Sprint Review Survey](#) located on the [Workforce Professional Center website](#).

Until next month...that’s a little bit about WIT!

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Resources and other updates

Washington Workforce Association holds 2023 Fall Conference in Tacoma.

STRONGER TOGETHER! And it is true!

Submitted by Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant

Last week, Nov. 14 - 16, several Employment Connections colleagues converged on downtown Tacoma to attend this year's Washington Workforce Association 2023 Fall Conference. This year's theme was "Stronger Together."

The conference had numerous quality messages and uplifting takeaways, as well as opportunities to network with colleagues and partners. The keynote speakers were inspirational, and the days were well-organized with sessions on a variety of topics. Seventy concepts were proposed and 40 were presented with a focus on: 1) partnerships and coalition building, 2) building a more inclusive workforce, 3) industry engagement and 4) performance and operations.

An inspirational kick-off was presented by [Christian Paige](#), Washington poet, speaker and educator. Sound bites from speakers and presenters are captured in a [conference Google Jamboard](#) you can read and save.



Workforce development partners came from all around the state, and I was surprised at how many faces I recognized in the crowd. My focus for the conference was to learn about current workforce trends and seek out topics related to how we tell our story with an ear for [ESD's Core Values](#). I attended sessions on the next leadership revolution, ageism, how AI's ChatGPT can be leveraged and inclusive storytelling.

Workforce SW Washington participated in several panel discussions and presented on the [Quality Jobs Initiative](#). Other local Workforce Development Council teams, education and nonprofit partners were critical to the creative conversations and working discussions. Boards and special project teams coordinated on times to come together and take advantage of the convergence of leaders – all focused on making a positive impact on the future of Washington's statewide public workforce system.

I feel fortunate to have been able to attend and to have the opportunity to participate with passionate, smart, dedicated people who want to change lives and make a difference. It was a fast three days, and like many who attended, I can't wait until next year!



Left: Workforce Southwest Washington's team showing the way on Quality Jobs: Sean Moore, Amy Gimlin, Marnie Farness and Mando Antonino -- facilitating (not pictured, not forgotten).

Right: Partners working together — Rhianna Johnson, Clark College; and inclusive storytelling panel: Betsy Hanrahan, Kari Kollander, and Julia Maglione, Workforce Southwest Washington.



Left to right: Elizabeth Kiehn, Krishna Banerjee, and Susan Milke, WorkSource Vancouver.

Key takeaway for Krishna Banerjee, WorkSource Vancouver:
Mindset is a predictor of success.

"I learned so much from the conference, and I met my mentor in the Mentorship Program in person, as well."

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2023 YesVets Hire-A-Vet Employer of the Year Awards and HIREvet.org Medallion Program awards.

Congratulations to our small, medium and large Washington employers of the year!

Submitted by Seth Maier, EC Veterans & Military Families Program operator, and Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant

Since the start of the [ESD YesVets program](#), over 1,700 employers have hired more than 7,500 veterans. ESD and Employment Connections understand the many benefits to hiring veterans and veteran family members. They bring countless talents and skills to the workplace. To recognize Washington employers who prioritize hiring veterans and their spouses is an honor.

On Nov. 7, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA), ESD YesVets and the [Seattle Seahawks Task Force 12 program](#) hosted a virtual job fair that drew Washington employers and job seekers from across the

country. Over 220 job seekers spoke with 127 employer and resource representatives, giving the event a 67% show rate. Results are still coming in on great veteran job-hire stories!

During the event, Commissioner Cami Feek announced the [ESD 2023 YesVets Hire-A-Vet Employer of the Year awards](#). She honored the following employers for their commitment to hiring and supporting veterans in the workforce. These employers support veterans in ways above and beyond – substantially exceeding the stringent award criteria set by the YesVets program.



Small employer – [Form 100 Consulting](#), **Eagle, Idaho** — Owned and staffed by 100% veterans with 100% veterans hires in 2023. They hired Washington veterans and nearly doubled their staff. The company works on Washington projects focused on high-performance software development based on military servant-leadership principles. Even the company name is a military reference. Hear [the company's story](#) from founder, Nate Amidon.

Medium employer – [Guy F. Atkinson Construction, LLC](#), **Renton** – The company hired 23 veterans in 2023 – 10% of the company's current workforce is veteran based. This heavy civil-construction company leads the industry in safely building complex, quality projects and is dedicated to hiring innovative and ethical professionals. They are committed to apprenticeships and supporting transitioning veterans. They are also connecting a company-wide Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG) that will bring together all eight branches of parent company, [CLARK Construction](#).

Large employer – [Washington State Patrol \(WSP\)](#), **Olympia** – 15% of WSP hires in 2023 were veterans, which resulted in hundreds of veterans being added to the WSP ranks. Veterans now represent 12% of their total workforce of over 2,149 officers and support staff.

The WSP sponsors a VERG and has established a veteran mentor support group — coaching transitioning veterans. This extends to mentorship of families serving in the National Guard and immediate family members, with a strong focus on health and wellness services and stress reduction support. WSP also develops and retains staff with a comprehensive leadership skills curriculum. See [Gov. Inslee's Nov. 17 news release](#) recognizing the WSP YesVets award.

On Nov. 8, the Department of Labor (DOL) [HIREVets.gov](https://www.dhs.gov/hirevets) announced its [2023 Medallion Awards Employer of the Year winners](#). This year, of the [859 recipients](#), 15 Washington employers [qualified](#) and were recognized with Platinum (2) and Gold (13) awards for their dedication and commitment to veteran hiring, retention and professional development. These companies are highlighted below. The Washington Hire-A-Vet Employer of the Year Award recognizes businesses and other organizations that go above and beyond in hiring Veterans. There are three employer size categories: small employers (1-50 employees), medium employers (51-499) employees, and large employers (500+ employees).

2023 Department of Labor HIRE Vets Medallion Employer of the Year Awards — Washington State Awardees —	
Small	Aunty's Place Early Learning & Child Care Center, LLC, Auburn Technology learning Group, Inc. TLG Learning, Bellevue GDM of Oregon, Bingen Davis Agency, LLC, Federal way (<i>Platinum award</i>) NineLine Veteran Services, Fife Spees, LLC, Spees Design Build, Kent (<i>Platinum award</i>) TorrNet Technology, LLC, Lacey Frontier Market Solutions, Ravenox, Mt. Vernon Beeline Tours Ltd., Seattle
Medium	Evergreen Fire Alarms, LLC, Evergreen Fire and Security, Tacoma Thompson Metal Fab, Inc., Vancouver ELYON Internal, Inc. Vancouver
Large	Puget Sound Energy, Bellevue Cascade Environmental, Cascade Drilling, Bothell BGIS, Seattle

Honoring and celebrating our veterans goes beyond Veterans Day and the month of November. It is today and every day. The DVA showcases this in Washington veterans' stories. Be sure to watch: [Veterans Day 2023: Veteran Voices Across Washington - YouTube](#).

See ESD's [Nov. 10 note from Commissioner Feek](#) for more information on the Hire-A-Vet Awards and other Veterans Day activities.

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Native American Heritage Month – November 2023

Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity: Paying tribute to the rich ancestry and traditions of Native Americans.

Submitted by Victoria Pruett, EC communications consultant



[Native American Heritage Month](#) creates awareness of Native and Indigenous people across our country. This formal celebration of Native American heritage was established in 1990 by President George H.W. Bush and is focused on recognizing the achievements and contributions of their culture and people. It is a way to make sure that the histories, traditions, and rich stories of Native Americans continue to be remembered, passed

down and shared. It is also a time to acknowledge the injustices that Native Americans have suffered and to recognize the challenges they still face and how those challenges can be overcome.

This year's theme, designated by the U.S. Department of Interior, is *Celebrating Tribal Sovereignty and Identity*. Recognizing sovereignty ensures that decisions about tribes -- their property and citizens -- are made by the tribes with their participation and consent.



*Nez Perce and Yakima Indians gathered in Astoria, Oregon, in 1911.
Image credit: Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Washington, D.C.*

Knowing where you live – respecting the history of the land

If you are interested in respecting Native American history and researching the tribal lands you currently live and work on, this is an opportunity to educate yourself and learning more. There are [maps to find ancestral lands](#) where you live.

In addition, NativeAmericanHeritageMonth.gov provides many great resources, online workshops, discussions, gallery talks, history and more.

If you are interested in reading the full article and learning about Northwest tribes along with some additional resources, go to [read more](#).

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Management tips

Promoting curiosity and strategic thinking: Muscles you can build on.

What does it mean to be curious and what does that have to do with being a strategic thinker and leader?



Being curious can help us all become better — better learners, better listeners and better leaders. It is the root of inquisitive thinking, exploring, and investigating. Having a curious nature is how we develop a desire for knowledge and information. Those — along with awareness and accuracy -- are the essential nutrients in building and flexing how we learn, how we perceive information and gain insight and make decisions.

As we learn to apply information and knowledge to situations and come up with solutions, critical thinking comes into play; and we become strategic in thinking of all the possible options and outcomes. Being a good communicator and strategic listener never hurts either. Some of the best leaders have a way of simplifying the complicated by focusing on the simplest form of a situation or issue and painting pictures with analogies and metaphors.



These are skills that can be developed and improved upon. You can become more curious, and you can learn to think strategically. Here are some articles from Harvard Business Review — starting with curiosity and building into strategic

thinking — and one from University of Washington’s Center for Leadership and Strategic Thinking on how the Apple TV+ show, [Ted Lasso](#), imparts some rich leadership insights.

[“How to Strengthen Your Curiosity Muscle,”](#) by Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic

[“4 Phrases That Build a Culture of Curiosity,”](#) by Scott Shigeoka

[“How to Become a Better Strategic Thinker,”](#) by Rich Horwath

[“10 Ways to Prove You’re a Strategic Thinker,”](#) by Brenda Steinberg and Michael D. Watkins

[“Lasso on Leadership,”](#) by Professor Bruce Avolio, University of Washington, Foster School of Business.

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In this time of Thanksgiving

May the good things of life be yours in abundance, not only at Thanksgiving but all throughout the year/all year long.



Wishing you a restful and relaxing holiday!

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